



Committee report

Committee	ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL
Date	26 NOVEMBER 2012
Title	2012 ISLE OF WIGHT FESTIVAL
Report of	Stuart Love, Director of Economy and Environment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. On the Thursday and Friday morning of the 2012 Isle of Wight Festival there was significant disruption to affected sections of the Island's public highway network. This report sets out the reasons for the disruption as well as the actions that will be taken to ensure that there is not a repeat of this level of disruption in the future.
2. Following the disruption that occurred there have been numerous comments and questions regarding the economic benefit of the Isle of Wight Festival to the Island. This report also seeks to address this issue based on the information available to the Council.
3. The views of the Scrutiny Panel are sought as to the actions that are proposed.

BACKGROUND

4. On Thursday 21 June 2012 and the morning of Friday 22 June 2012 there was significant disruption to the Island's northern road network. The main cause of this was the fact that the ground conditions of the Isle of Wight Festival car parks had made them inaccessible. This in turn resulted in traffic queuing on the Island's roads, vehicles being "stacked" at Fishbourne ferry terminal, ferries from Portsmouth being unable to offload and congestion in Portsmouth which had to be managed by Portsmouth City Council.
5. Up to 5,500 vehicles were expected to be accommodated in the Festival car parks which had become inaccessible following heavy and persistent rainfall in the 24 hours running up to the start of the Festival, exacerbating what had already been a very wet month of June.
6. Whilst the event organisers, Solo, had contingency plans in place to deal with the ground conditions, it became apparent that the measures put in place were simply not able to cope with the conditions. The contingency plans were focused on bringing the car parks back into use through laying down limestone and gravel and

aluminium tracking in order to improve accessibility. By the time that these plans were activated the conditions were such that they had little impact.

7. It has become clear that, on Thursday 22 June, inaccurate information was being provided to the Council, Police and Ferry companies as to the rate at which vehicles were entering the car parks. This led to Ferries continuing to be loaded and delayed the decision to implement alternative car parking and traffic management arrangements.

IMPACT ON RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES AND VISITORS

8. There was a significant impact on residents, visitors and businesses using the sections of the highway network affected by the Festival. The following is a summary of the issues that were apparent at the time as well as from the correspondence and comments that have followed.
 - Residents were unable to get to work, this in turn impacted on certain businesses which had to operate without full staffing complements.
 - Residents were stuck in their vehicles for significant periods of time when trying to leave or return home.
 - Residents having to abandon vehicles and walk home, others being confined to their homes.
 - The disruption impacted those who needed to use the affected sections of the road network for deliveries or to get to appointments, including medical appointments.
 - Loss of productivity for local businesses.
 - People who were working on the mainland or had appointments on the mainland were either significantly delayed or unable to attend appointments / work. There was particularly an impact on the Thursday evening when residents were attempting to return home from the mainland.
 - Concerns raised regarding the lack of amenities for those stuck in traffic and in particular the fact that this led to people having to urinate on the roadside.
 - School Lift:
 - Thursday – significant delays to all routes to and from Ryde, East Cowes and Bembridge areas. Delays of up to four hours both in the morning and afternoon journeys. This affected students travelling to Cowes Enterprise College, Christ the King College, Medina College and Carisbrooke College.
 - Friday – Due to continuing traffic congestion a number of school bus services had to be cancelled or diverted. This affected services to Cowes Enterprise College and Christ the King College. The issues experienced were less on this day as Medina and Carisbrooke College were closed. It was also necessary to cancel a small number of taxi contracts operating from East Cowes.
 - Monday – No major issues, though a small number of school bus services continued to operate on diversionary routes avoiding the Festival site in the morning. Medina College was closed with the exception of those students attending GCSE exams. Travel on public network bus services was organised for these students to alleviate congestion.
 - Over and above the disruption to the school lift mentioned above and the delays therefore in getting to and from certain schools, there was no material

impact on the education service. Medina College confirmed that no child was adversely affected and no pupil missed an exam.

- Whilst the impact on care staff employed by the Council appears to have been minimal and well managed, there was an impact on external providers in the affected areas in terms of staff being able to get to their place of work as well as to attend appointments. From the research conducted post event it appears that all calls were attended to, with one being undertaken by a family member rather than the carer. One hospital appointment was cancelled.
- Concerns were raised regarding the impact on emergency services and their ability to attend emergencies. As emergency services have to deal with congestion on a regular basis this is not an area of significant concern and emergencies would have been attended under “blue lights” should it have been necessary to do so.
- A number of comments were received regarding the location of the Festival and whether or not Newport is appropriate. The Council believes that the current location is appropriate given its proximity to the amenities needed to stage an event. At this stage the Council is not intending to enter into discussions with the event organiser regarding relocation. An initial decision to move the event would be for the event organisers rather than the Council.
- Suggestions have been made that the Festival and Bestival should be car free. This is not something that is currently within the remit of the Isle of Wight Council to address, neither is it considered practical given that both events are family oriented and aimed at campers who will have large amounts of equipment.
- The Festival premises licence allows for 90,000 on site including event staff and a number of comments were received that this number is too large. For the 2012 Isle of Wight Festival the organisers capped the number of attendees at 55,000 prior to the event starting. This is smaller than in previous years and fewer vehicles travelled to the Island for the Festival than we have had in previous years. As a point of fact, significantly more cars travelled to the Bestival event in September. The Council has granted a licence for up to 90,000 and the Festival has an agreement to use Seaclose Park up to and including 2019. The premises licence, granted in 2010, has no end date.
- A number of questions were asked as to whether or not there would be a review of the licence. Whilst the Council has no intention of requesting a review itself, any interested party can do so and a review request has been received. Any person wishing to request a review needs to complete a formal request detailing the grounds on which they are requesting it. Primarily this means which licensing objective the current licence does not meet (prevention of crime and disorder, prevention of public nuisance, the protection of children from harm or public safety). That person then becomes the 'applicant' who presents their case to the licensing committee. Anyone wishing to request a review should contact the licensing team on 01983 823159 or email licensing@iow.gov.uk.
- Comments and questions were received regarding foreseeability given the wet weather that preceded the event, not just that which occurred in the 24 hours prior to the event.
- Comments and concerns regarding a lack of communication with residents and Festival goers stuck in traffic, particularly on the Friday morning.
- A number of comments and questions were received regarding the benefit of the Festival to the Island's economy and the cultural benefits.

- Concerns were raised as to the impact on public funds and questions raised as to the cost and income to both the Council and the Police. The Police negotiate their costs separately with the event organisers; the Isle of Wight Council is not party to these negotiations. The IW Fire and Rescue Service recovers its costs under the Isle of Wight Act and the Council recovers its costs through license fees as well as under the Isle of Wight Act. The Council charges for the following: a rental charge for the use of Seaclose Park, staff time, cost of reparation of Seaclose Park (including holding a bond for this purpose), additional cleansing costs associated with the Festival, the use of Medina Leisure Centre and the cost of changes to and managing the highways infrastructure. The income received by the Council is set out in the table below and is used to offset the costs incurred by the Council as a result of the Festival.

Year	Income (Gross £)
2002	98,195.74
2003	50,394.36
2004	148,477.04
2005	125,093.45
2006	170,453.76
2007*	15,597.65
2008*	23,449.34
2009	137,762.30
2010	119,445.42
2011	123,207.64
2012	112,988.78

* In 2007 and 2008 tickets and VIP access were accepted in lieu of money. The purpose of this was to use these for entertaining inward investors and other VIPs. This was ceased after two years when it was clear that it was difficult to definitively evaluate or demonstrate the benefits of this approach.

- Post event there were complaints regarding mud on the roads causing dangerous driving conditions. The Council and event organiser had identified this as a potential problem and worked during and after the egress to clear the mud away as quickly as possible. Any additional complaints in this regard were attended to as and when they were received. No road traffic collisions linked with mud on the road during the 2012 Isle of Wight Festival were reported to the Council or the Police. We are aware of one pedestrian who slipped in the mud on the road and who has lodged a claim against the Council as a result.
- There was some disruption to funerals, although all went ahead with main family mourners present, other than in one case where a member of family could not get to the crematorium.
- Subsequent to the event it has come to light that there is a licensing condition that requires the "licensing authority" to sign off the Event Safety Operational Plan (ESOP). This requirement was introduced in 2011, however the ESOP has not previously been signed off by the licensing authority. The ESOP is the responsibility of the event organiser to produce and is considered by the Safety Advisory Group (SAG). The SAG includes Council Officers (Licensing, Environmental Health, Emergency Management, Fire and Rescue, Highways), Police, Ambulance Service, bus company, Ferry companies, etc. Though not presented for formal sign off, the ESOP was approved by the SAG as is

required. See Appendix D which sets out the role of the SAG in more detail and as recommended by the Health and Safety Executive.

LESSONS LEARNED / ACTIONS

9. The 2012 Isle of Wight Festival was the eleventh following ten years in which the inevitable disruption to the Island's road network was manageable. Each year following this and other major events on the Island, there are debrief meetings involving all relevant agencies and organisations with a view to ensuring that lessons are learned and plans improved for the next year and for other events. As a result of the disruption on the Thursday and Friday of this year's Isle of Wight Festival a specific and particular focus has been on the cause of the disruption and considering options for ensuring that this does not happen again. Numerous changes were made as a result in the manner in which we manage traffic for the Festival. These proved successful and the same principles will be applied to future Isle of Wight Festivals.

Communication

10. On the Thursday of the Isle of Wight Festival inaccurate information was being passed to the Council, Police and Ferry companies as to the rate at which vehicles were entering the car parks, with the rate of entry being overstated. This led to decisions being made based on incorrect information which added to the congestion problems. In order to improve communication during the event the Council deployed Raynet (The Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network), a voluntary communications service provided by licensed radio amateurs.

Action – The Council to deploy additional highway staff for the Festival and Festival to monitor key pinch points on the road network as well as to monitor car park entrances to provide an accurate picture of traffic movement and the accessibility of car parks. This to be supplemented by formalising the use of Raynet for all major events rather than on a purely reactive basis as has been the case in the past. Both of these actions were implemented successfully for the 2012 Festival.

11. The gates to the car parks were not open when the first cars began to arrive on site. A number of people chose to travel on the first sailings of the morning on the Thursday as the tickets were cheaper than later travel. The car parks were opened at the advertised time, however given that a number of people had travelled over earlier this meant that there was congestion on the network even before the problems with the car parks themselves arose.
12. On the Friday morning of the Festival there was confusion as to who would provide an update to Isle of Wight Radio and its listeners as to the current state with regards to the Island's road network and what was being done to address the problems.

Action – In future the default position will be that the Council provides regular updates through social media and that a Council officer is available as a spokesperson to the media particularly where matters affect the public highway or amenity of our residents, businesses and visitors. In addition to this signage will be erected to encourage people to tune in to Isle of Wight Radio for traffic updates. This approach has been successfully deployed for the 2012 Festival. Furthermore agreement has been reached with Isle of Wight Radio to 'embed' a Council

spokesperson at the station when there is a need for real time information to be relayed.

13. During the course of the event the Police offered blue light escort for emergencies as well as to school buses if needed. This information did not reach either the Isle of Wight social care teams or our external providers.

Action – The Council produces an operational plan for all of its own events. The plan details how the event will be managed by the Council. In the future the Council will produce an operational plan for the Festival and Bestival detailing how the Council will deal with off-site issues and focusing largely on highways management. The operational plan includes input from all Council departments and therefore addresses escalation procedures and lines of communication. This approach was taken to the Bestival and ensured that all areas of the Council were aware of what was expected of them and clarified lines of communication based on existing business continuity and emergency management plans.

Contingency Arrangements

14. Whilst there were contingency arrangements in place, these were all focused on bringing the existing car parks back into use. It is important to note that, given the number of vehicles expected at the event, there will always be a need to utilise the designated event car parks. By the time it became apparent that the additional tracking and gravel were having little effect there was already significant disruption on the road network. The event organiser then contacted numerous private landowners with large areas of hard standing to negotiate the use of these for Festival parking. This was done on a reactive and largely unplanned basis which resulted in some abortive deals being negotiated where agreement was reached by the event organisers with the landowner, only for the Council, Police and bus company to veto the plan on operational grounds.

Action – The Council to work with event organisers and local landowners to identify car parks for use in the event that they are needed. These plans to be in place prior to an event rather than negotiated on an ad hoc basis during the event. Whilst the cost of these contingency arrangements will be borne by event organisers, the Council is aware of what locations will work from a traffic management point of view and be acceptable to the Police and Bus Company (which would be required to transfer people parked in off-site car parks to campsites and the event itself). The Council also is also well placed to facilitate contact with relevant landowners.

The Council has also identified public car parks to be used as holding areas for Festival traffic in the event they are required. This will allow traffic to be taken off the public highway for a period of time if needed.

15. The Council's focus to date in terms of network management has been to ensure that the event organiser's traffic management plan to get traffic to and from the event and Ferry terminals is acceptable. This has not previously entailed taking a wider view of the network for contingency planning purposes.

Action – A wider view to be taken of the highways network as well as non-commuter Council owned car parks. This means that the highways network, outside of main roads, may be used for stacking vehicles in order to keep traffic flowing on main routes. In terms of car parks, esplanade car parking in Ryde and Sandown in

particular to form part of future contingency plans to be used as holding areas whilst issues which may result in congestion / disruption are dealt with. These plans were in place for this year's Bestival, albeit that they were not needed.

Infrastructure

16. It is clear to both the event organisers and the Council that there cannot be a repeat of this year's disruption. As a result the event organisers have proposed options for improving access to their car parks and improving the infrastructure within the car parks.

Additional access points to the car parks are planned and the Council will work with the event organisers to help identify and facilitate any options for addressing the accessibility of the car parks.

17. For the 2012 Bestival steps were taken by the Council and the event organisers to keep Southampton and Portsmouth traffic separate. This eased the pressure on the Island's road network and in particular on key pinch points that have been areas of significant congestion in the past. The Isle of Wight Festival Organisers have adopted a similar approach and a plan has been prepared that avoids conflict between East Cowes and Fishbourne traffic. The Council will work with the event organisers to ensure that this solution is implemented.

Various Other Issues and Actions

18. As stated in paragraph eight, one of the conditions of the Isle of Wight Festival licence is a requirement for the licencing authority to sign off the Event Safety Operational Plan. This requirement was introduced in 2011, however the ESOP has not previously been signed off by the licensing authority. There is also currently no definition of what constitutes the licensing authority and there is no provision within the Council's scheme of delegations that identifies where responsibility for signing the ESOP resides. There is no consistency as the Bestival Licence does not have a condition requiring the licencing authority to sign off its ESOP.

Action – In order to address this, the Director of Economy and Environment to sign off the ESOP for both the Isle of Wight Festival and the Bestival. The purpose of the sign off is to confirm that all relevant agencies have had input into and agreed the final version of the ESOP.

19. The Council will be discussing with Solo the need for them to have a dedicated / named lead on traffic management issues and for this lead to work alongside officers before and during the event. This will assist not only in the planning of the event, but also when problems arise during the event. It is also clear that the Council's own communication and escalation procedures did not work as they should have. As a result of this a more robust senior management rota has been developed for use in all major events.

ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BENEFITS

20. Attached as Appendix B is the 2008 report on the Economic and Environmental Impact of the Isle of Wight Festival. This report was commissioned by the Isle of Wight Council and prepared by the Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) in Sheffield. The primary aim of the report was to evaluate the economic impact of that

year's Isle of Wight Festival. The report also addressed the wider environmental considerations of staging the Festival based on an analysis of carbon emissions connected to the event.

21. The detail of how much and where Festival goers spent their money is clearly set out in the report and is based on evidence collected in over 1,000 interviews with attendees at the Festival. On this basis the Council is satisfied that the methodology is robust. The research organisation - Sheffield Hallam University - is an industry recognised standard in terms of process and quality for the compilation of reports of this nature, hence the reasons for commissioning them to undertake the work.
22. The report identifies expenditure by non-Island based Festival goers of £7.4m, "down weighted" to £5m to take into account the amount that would be spent with off Island suppliers. The report goes on to state that the overall economic impact of the Festival goers is estimated to be close to £10m once other factors such as expenditure by Island residents are taken into account. These figures exclude any expenditure by the Festival organisers in staging the event, estimated to be a further £10m of which a significant sum would be spent with Island businesses. It also excludes the value of the considerable media coverage associated with the event.
23. A number of comments have been received to the effect that the Festival discourages other non-Festival related tourism on the weekend of the event. It is possible that the Festival does have a mildly distorting impact on non-Festival attendees visiting the Island, however this must be set in the context of the Festival weekend being chosen on the basis that it was traditionally a low point in visitor numbers, prior to the start of the main tourist season.
24. Other comments have been received to the effect that a large proportion of spectator spend is with the main national stores on the Island. However it must be stressed that these stores all employ Island residents who in turn spend their wages on the Island. Many of these stores also stock local produce which would be in greater demand if these stores are experiencing increased footfall.
25. The following quotes regarding the economic benefits of the Isle of Wight Festival were received in the wake of the 2012 event and set an important context to the economic benefits of the Isle of Wight Festival. It is particularly important to note that whilst the actual total economic benefit of the Festival cannot be calculated to be 100% accurate, it certainly runs into many millions which is a very significant addition to the Island's economy. The indirect benefits of the Festival in terms of the Island's national and international reputation should also not be underestimated.

Simon Dabell (chair of Visit Isle of Wight) said:

"The benefits to the Island's tourist industry are numerous although not necessarily realised over the Festival weekend itself.

It is clear the event generates colossal national and international promotion for the Island – exposure that we would not be able to afford ourselves. This includes coverage in the specialist press, virtually every national newspaper and also on the Sky Arts channel.

There is also the likelihood that many people who visit the Island to attend the Festival may well return later as visitors to the Island.

While the problems at this year's event will have to be, and I am sure will be, overcome, I believe the Festival is of great benefit to the Island and I would certainly want to see it continue".

Kevin Smith (Chief Executive of the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce, Tourism and Industry) said:

"I think to argue exactly how much the Festival brings to the Island misses the point. The fact is, whatever the exact figure, the economic benefit to the Island is hugely significant. Without this Festival this benefit – which unquestionably runs into many millions – will be lost.

There are those businesses who are actively involved on site and in setting up and providing the event infrastructure, there are also those who provide services and goods to the Festival audience off site.

But another benefit is the profile the event brings to a national and international audience. This exposure portrays the Island as a vibrant place. It puts us on the international map which helps the profile of businesses already here and also puts us in the eyes of businesses who may be looking to relocate".

Norman Arnold (Anchor Employment and the Isle of Wight Federation of Small Businesses) said:

"The Festival attracts tangible benefits directly to a number of Island-owned businesses, notably those supplying infrastructure as well as local food and drink to the main site. Added to this is the off-site hospitality industry, largely focused around Newport, plus a wide range of other organisations including those providing goods, travel and services to Festival go-ers and the great many temporary staff who are employed in and around the Festival.

There are also numerous other business such as supermarkets and banks who, while not Island based, nevertheless employ a great many Island people. Similarly, having packed ferries paying often premium prices for the Festival, is how the ferry companies can afford the virtually empty sailings in the winter.

"But alongside these tangible benefits, we would also do well to consider the great many and valuable intangible benefits the Festival brings. The Festival has given the Island real profile and credibility. For the many of us who do the bulk of our business elsewhere, it is nice not having to explain where we are all the time and this is because clients have heard of the Festival on an international scale. The free publicity it generates is worth a fortune in PR fees alone.

All in all it's a good thing for the Island's business community, employment and services and long may it continue".

26. Attached for information as Appendix C is an article from Quality Edge (Summer 2012 Issue 15). Quality Edge is VisitEngland's magazine for quality assessed accommodation providers and attractions. The article explores the importance of music Festivals to tourism in particular with an estimated visitor spend of £1.4bn being generated by Festivals and concerts in the UK in 2009.

27. The Isle of Wight Festival supports the Hospice who have collected in excess of £100,000 in nine years of attending the event. Following the Island's lead, the national hospice movement has also begun collecting at mainland Festivals including Camp Bestival and Glastonbury.
28. The event also brings significant cultural benefits to the Island. **Dr Brian Hinton MBE (a respected music writer and biographer of the Festival) said:**
"I am writing as historian both of the original IOW Festivals 1968-1970 in my book *Message to Love*, and of the new Seaclose based Festival, as revived in 2002, in my later book *Bold as Love*. I am also involved in various Island charities, and work as a freelance music critic, attending and reviewing Festivals nationwide.

Under the careful custodianship of Solo, the revived IOW Festival has developed an enviable reputation as a well organised and securely patrolled affair, which has helped put the IOW back on the map as an international music venue. The Festival attracts national TV coverage, and highly respectful reviews. The only criticisms are ones which I would take as beneficial. Namely that the organisers take the greatest care to protect and look after their audience, and that they play safe with line-ups, bringing classic acts and line-ups, thus remaining in sympathy with the ethos and indeed featuring some of the performers from earlier IOW Festivals.

This sense of the past, as celebrated in the stage logo and poster/ticket design, refreshed each year, classic footage on the giant visual screens, and Festival signage, deliberately taps into reminders of the IOW's extraordinary musical heritage.

The figure of Jimi Hendrix, who played his final major show here – well captured on film – continues to grow in stature as does his performance at Afton in 1970. The memorial statue to him outside of Dimbola is now firmly established as a rock shrine which attracts fans from all over the world, who come over to be photographed alongside it.

The new Festivals bring undoubted financial benefits in terms of Ferry tickets, hotel bookings and local shops, not least because this is well outside the usual tourist boost of school holidays. They have helped to rebrand the IOW as "cool" for a whole new generation of young people. And they enable local people to enjoy the finest performers in the world – Paul McCartney, Bruce Springsteen, Neil Young, the Rolling Stones, REM, the list goes on seemingly forever – appearing without their need to leave the IOW. The Festivals also prioritise local performers, both on the garden stage, in the Kasbah Café and even the main stage, and give them a huge career boost, as well as indicating the heights they need to attain as live performers. They also give employment to a large numbers of local artists and designers, as well as giving charities like Dimbola (which I chair) the chance to show their collections of Victorian photographs by a local 19C pioneer female artist to thousands of young gig-goers. Finally, it shows off the best of Island landscape to youngsters who are bound to make countless repeat visits to the place they will later remember with such fondness

I was as frustrated as many by the traffic delays at the start of the Festival this year - problems which seemed to have been solved at the end of the Festival and indeed in the complementary Bestival at the end of the summer – but argue that the benefits these major events make to tourism, the Island economy, the local arts scene and

the enjoyment of tens of thousands of people in a safe and controlled environment far outweigh this one-off hiccup”.

RECOMMENDATION

29. The Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel is requested to consider and make recommendations on the contents of this report and in particular the lessons learned section.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

30. [Appendix A](#) – 27 June 2012: Email from Councillor Edward Giles to Stuart Love.
[Appendix B](#) – The Economic and Environmental Impacts of the 2008 Isle of Wight Festival
[Appendix C](#) – Making Sweet Music
[Appendix D](#) – Health and Safety Executive Guidance on the role of Local Authority Safety Advisory Groups

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